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Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity [Review]

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Manlio Simonetti's *La crisi ariana nel VI secolo* (1975) and the two works have become standard and seminal for subsequent studies of the period. Rather than focusing on a particular figure or one specific aspect of the complex intellectual struggle of the fourth century (very fine studies of this sort abound), Hanson (like Simonetti) offers a narrative account that is at once comprehensive, detailed, and quite readable. While, as is the case with any important and ambitious work, readers might not agree with all of Hanson's assessments (his rather harsh estimation of Athanasius, for instance, or his less than sympathetic presentation of pre-critical scriptural interpretation), the book is nonetheless profoundly valuable and helpful. Today it can be supplemented by the multivolume work of John Behr—*The Way to Nicaea* (2001) and *The Nicene Faith* (2004)—and Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy* (2004), both of whom significantly advance the work of Hanson, in particular by their independently reached but shared recognition of the critically important role that the reading of scripture played in shaping the issues and affecting the personalities in the fourth-century debates about the Word.

Michael Heintz
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ABANDONED TO LUST: SEXUAL SLANDER AND ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY. By Jennifer Wright Knust. *Gender Theory and Religion*. London: Keegan Paul International, Limited, 2005. Pp. xi + 279. N.p. ISBN 0-231-13662-5.

The author argues that accusations of sexual depravity in early Christian literature, whatever their historical value, must be placed in the broader context of Greco-Roman rhetorical traditions in which charges of sexual deviance were stock elements of rhetorical slander. The first chapter, "Sexual Slander and Ancient Invective," shows the degree to which the discourses of status and gender were intertwined in the Greco-Roman world. In this context, accusations of sexual deviance served the construction and maintenance of an elite identity understood as a male who is able to control his passions and avoid excess. In four subsequent chapters she tracks the Christian appropriation of this rhetorical tradition. In his letters Paul constructs Christians as the only true elites by implying that "the only men truly capable of mastering desire were those 'in Christ'." Responding to accusations of sexual depravity, Justin Martyr and other apologists respond in kind, using sexualized slander to portray non-Christians while emphasizing the chastity of Christians. The final two chapters examine the ways in which sexual slander is used by Christians against other Christians in the letters of Jude and 1 Peter, The Shepherd of Hermas, and the heresiological works of Justin the Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyons. A revision of her Columbia University dissertation, this well-written and carefully organized book will certainly be of interest to specialists and graduate students, but could also be appropriate for advanced undergraduates.

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DEMONS AND THE MAKING OF THE MONK: SPIRITUAL COMBAT IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY. By David Brakke. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2006. Pp. ix + 298. \$51.50, ISBN 0-674-01875-3.

In this important work, David Brakke examines how the idea of the early Egyptian Christian monastic was formed in the literature during conflicts with demons and how that helped to construct a distinctively Christian demonology. Defining demonology as an "activity of literature" where writers "use demons to address pressing intellectual problems," the author places the demons at center stage as the monastic antagonist vital to the production of monastic identity. In Part One, "The Monk in Combat," Brakke analyzes key texts from Athanasius, Evagrius Ponticus, Pachomius, and Shenoute and exposes the diverse ways that each author constructed the individual monk as a champion against demons. In Part Two, "War Stories," Brakke examines monastic demon encounters thematically to show how the discourse of demons serves to motivate constructions of the "other," often associating the self, the feminine, and the non-Christian with the demonic. The implications of this work reverberate well past the monk's cell in the Egyptian desert—Brakke shows how the demonologies constructed in these settings echo throughout the early Christian tradition, in both east and west, and well past the middle ages. Moreover, his use of psychoanalytic concepts to explicate the narrative of monk-demon encounter, reminiscent of D. Elliott's brilliant *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 1999), along with his magisterial use of intellectual history and cultural studies, reveals an innovative interdisciplinary methodology that should serve as a model for scholars of the history of religion in the twenty-first century.

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CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA. By Eric Osborn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. xviii + 342. \$85.00, ISBN 0-521-83753-7.

In the course of a lengthy, distinguished, and productive career, E. Osborn has made significant contributions to our understanding of Christian theology in the second century. This volume complements his earlier studies of Justin (1973), and more recently of Tertullian (1997) and Irenaeus (2001), as well as his important synthesis, *The Emergence of Christian Theology* (1993), all fruits of an engagement with that intellectual milieu which spans some fifty years (his Cambridge dissertation, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria*, was published in 1957). After a brief biographical sketch, Osborn identifies three topics which "permeate" Clement's "entire work" and which provide the framework for this book. The first part treats "mobility" in the divine economy: from a kerygma of God's saving activity in history to an understanding of God; in Osborn's words, from "oracle to metaphysics." Osborn then turns his attention to the reciprocal relation of Father and Son, and the way this plays